

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY**

Meeting Date: May 19, 2004

Division: District 1

Bulk Item: Yes ☐ No ☐

Department: Commissioner Dixie M. Spehar

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**AGENDA ITEM WORDING:**

Resolution to honor the memory of Jeane Porter Kirke Poirier, a devoted writer and preservationist of Key West history.

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**ITEM BACKGROUND:**

She established the Heritage House Museum in 1990 and opened her family's home as a showcase of gracious island living and history that visitors to Key West see not only the island's commercial side, but also its tradition of culture, literature and the arts. She established the Robert Frost Poetry Festival, an annual poetry celebration held in honor of Robert Frost, "a pleasant older friend of (her) mother's" that showcases the talent of many local poets.

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**PREVIOUS REVELANT BOCC ACTION:**

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**CONTRACT/AGREEMENT CHANGES:**

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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**TOTAL COST:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BUDGETED:** Yes ☐ No ☐

**COST TO COUNTY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**REVENUE PRODUCING:** Yes ☐ No ☐ **AMOUNT PER MONTH** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVED BY:** County Atty X OMB/Purchasing \_\_\_\_\_ Risk Management \_\_\_\_\_

**DIVISION DIRECTOR APPROVAL:**

Dixie M. Spehar  
(Commissioner Dixie M. Spehar)

**DOCUMENTATION:** Included X To Follow \_\_\_\_\_ Not Required \_\_\_\_\_

**DISPOSITION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AGENDA ITEM #** m5

**RESOLUTION NO. 2004**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS OF MONROE COUNTY IN  
RECOGNITION OF THE LATE JEANE PORTER (POIRIER)**

**WHEREAS**, Jeane Porter passed away on April 18, 2004, at the age of 78; and

**WHEREAS**, Jeane Porter Kirke, was born on January 4, 1926, to Jessie Porter and Wallace Kirke in Bronxville, New York and came to Key West via Flagler's famous railroad a month after her birth; and

**WHEREAS**, Jeane was proud of her heritage as a sixth-generation Conch, descended from Dr. J.Y. Porter, Florida's first health officer and culminating with her mother, Jessie Porter, historian and preservationist; and

**WHEREAS**, Jeane started her education at the Key West Convent, and later at Miss Harris' School in Miami; she continued her education at the University of California at Berkeley, the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California, Mexico City and Europe, followed by a successful career in textile design in New York City; and

**WHEREAS**, Jeane was a talented artist, historian and supporter of local arts; she was passionate about Key West History, and devoted to the preservation of the island's heritage, both cultural and architectural; She established the Heritage House Museum in 1990 and opened her family's home as a showcase of gracious island living and history that visitors to Key West see not only the island's commercial side, but also its tradition of culture, literature and the arts;

**WHEREAS**: She established the Robert Frost Poetry Festival, an annual poetry celebration held in honor of Robert Frost, "a pleasant older friend of (her) mother's" that showcases the talent of many local poets; and

**WHEREAS**, Jeane loved to tell stories of Key West people and historic buildings from her youth, which were a source of much amusement and laughter; in 1998 she published them in Key West: Conch Smiles, a compilation of Key West legends and family stories; and

**WHEREAS**, Jeane is survived by her son, Porter Poirier, daughter, Renee Poirier Pound, both of California; daughter, Suzanne Poirier Campbell.; grandsons Kieran and Kyle Campbell of Key West; sister, Caroline Kirke Boyer of Tennessee; and nephews Thad and Eric Lang; and

**WHEREAS**, the memory of Jeane is secure in the cultural and creative history of Key West and in the hearts and minds of her many friends and family, now, therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF  
MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA:**

**Section 1:** Hereby memorializes the County's great appreciation for the service Jeane Porter gave to the community and for her love and concern for people and hereby expresses to her family their regret and deepest sympathy for the passing of the late Jeane Porter.

**Section 2:** Hereby adopts this Resolution as a permanent record of the high esteem and respect in which Jeane Porter was held by her colleagues and by the community.

**Section 3:** The Board of County Commissioners is hereby designated to forward a copy of this Resolution to the family of Jeane Porter expressing the Board's Sorrow.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of County Commissioners of Monroe County, Florida, at a meeting of said Board held on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D., 2004.

Mayor Murray E. Nelson  
Mayor Pro Tem David P. Rice  
Commissioner Dixie M. Spehar  
Commissioner George Neugent  
Commissioner Charles "Sonny" McCoy

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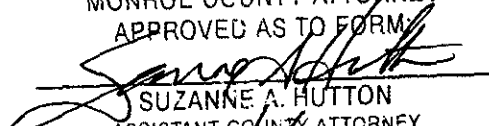
(SEAL)  
Attest: DANNY L. KOLHAGE, Clerk

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Clerk

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor/Chairman

MONROE COUNTY ATTORNEY  
APPROVED AS TO FORM

  
SUZANNE A. HUTTON  
ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY  
Date 5/4/04

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## Porter sought to preserve Key West's colorful past

BY MANDY BOLEN

Citizen Staff Writer



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File photo by MIKE HENTZ/The Citizen  
Jeane Porter turned her family's home into the Heritage House Museum, one of her many efforts to preserve Key West history. She died Sunday at the age of 78.

KEY WEST — Jeane Porter, who devoted much of her time to preserving Key West's past and personality, became a part of its history on Sunday when she died peacefully at the age of 78.

Porter's family history is synonymous with Key West's storied past. The name Porter peppers the island's ages like a familiar and powerful spice, and Porter loved to share stories from her historic home at 410 Caroline St., which she turned into the Heritage House Museum in 1990.

Born in New York in 1926, Porter arrived in Key West via Flagler's famous railroad a month after her birth and developed an unending connection to her island home. Although she spent several years traveling after marrying petroleum geologist Art

Poirier, Porter returned to Key West for good in 1979 after her three children, Renee, Suzanne and Porter were born.

Her return to Key West resounded throughout the community as Porter, a painter and supporter of the arts, established the Robert Frost Poetry Festival to honor the poet who had befriended her mother and spent a great deal of time in the back cottage of 410 Caroline St. that now bears his name.

Porter's stories were a source of much amusement and laughter, and she finally was persuaded to write them down in "Key West: Conch Smiles," which was published in 1998.

In the book, she offered a glimpse of Key West history as told and

Thu, Apr

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## CITIZEN

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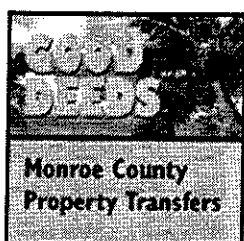
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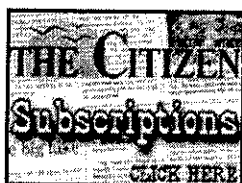
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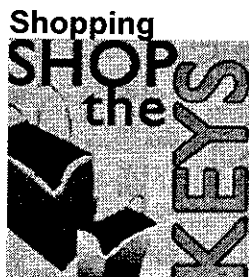


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interpreted through her family's perspective. Porter was descended from Dr. Joseph Yates Porter, who was Florida's first health officer and is credited with eradicating yellow fever in Key West, she said in her book, which describes the ebb and flow of Key West's economy and culture.

"Its latest 'high' — its success as a world tourist attraction — may be the biggest threat of all to its survival and identity," she wrote in explanation of what prompted her and her family to transform the front of the sprawling 1830s Caroline Street property into a museum that leads visitors through each period of Key West history with instruments, art, clothing and other objects.

At the end of the book, Porter left her "Wish List for Key West."

She wanted a new Southernmost Point marker, likening the current one to an unexploded World War II bomb. She also wanted to see the city dump, locally referred to as Mt. Trashmore, turned into a Greek-style amphitheater, the creation of a school of theater, radio and television in Key West and an annual historical musical pageant held at Fort Zachary Taylor.

But she left her readers with "My Wish Most of All," which states, "May our island develop more perspective so as not to be overwhelmed by commercial successes and greed. May it preserve its history and retain its outlandish individuality and may it keep a delicate balance intact between vision and reality.

"Old Conchs never die, they dry up and blow away."

[mbolen@keysnews.com](mailto:mbolen@keysnews.com)

This story published on Thu, Apr 22, 2004

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